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ABSTRACT

The summary of a round-table discussion and survey to determine the reality of administrator shortage in the school districts is the purpose of this report. Thirty-eight out of 45 mailed questionnaires to 41 district superintendents and 4 search consultants were completed. Findings of the round-table discussion and survey suggest that trends in teacher employment affect the administrative employment market. The number of well qualified administrative candidates for all administrative positions has decreased in recent years. The findings call into question such concerns as candidate preparation, attractiveness and salary of administrative positions, and professional work environment. However, these issues cannot be addressed without further study. A list of Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) Center advisory board members is included. (LMI)

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New York LEADCENTER Leadership in Educational Administration Development Center

A View From The Inside: An Administrative Shortage Real or Perceived?

A Monograph

A Roundtable/ Survey Report
Paul W. Haley
Richard D. McDonald

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A View From The Inside: An Administrative Shortage Real or Perceived?

Sponsored by:
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Richard D. McDonald

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ADMINISTRATIVE SHORTAGE REAL OR PERCEIVED?

There has been a great deal of conventional wisdom informally expressed among those playing a role in the hiring of school administrators that a shortage of candidates for such positions exists. There seems to be little hard data to support this notion and in fact evidence from the New York State Education Department, Division of Teacher Certification, indicates the number of persons who have been issued Administrator Certificates far exceeds the number of administrative positions in the state. There is no evidence that positions have gone unfilled because of a lack of qualified candidates and no evidence is available to suggest that certification requirements are an obstacle to candidacy. Discussion of shortages of administrative candidates may be tempered by such facts, but perceptions of both a decline in quantity and quality seem to persist.

In an effort to bring greater clarity to the discussion and to develop a more useful definition of what the problem of administrative shortage may be, an Invitational Roundtable on the topic was sponsored by the New York Leadership in Educational Administration Development Center in collaboration with the Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands.

Invitations to participate in this dialogue were accepted by the following organizational representatives:

Richard Bamberger, Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA)
Mark Berger, School of Education, SUNY at Albany
Joseph Bonita, New York State School Boards Association
Roseanne Fogarty, New York State School Boards Association
Paul W. Haley, The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands

Charles Hayes, New York University
Margaret Karpus, New York State Council of School Superintendents
Robert Lancto, School Administrators Association of New York State (SAANYS)
Richard McDonald, Leadership in Educational Administration Development LEAD Center/Albany
Murray Schneider, New York State Federation of School Administrators

The discussion focused on the following question. **"Is there a real or perceived shortage of candidates for administrative openings in the school districts?"**

If so...

- Is this a regional phenomenon or a widespread one ?
- Does it occur at all administrative levels or across levels?
- If a shortage exists, what are the causes?
- What should be done about it?

While no particular effort to develop consensus occurred, there was general agreement on a number of points:

- The average age of administrators has been increasing. The number eligible for retirement would indicate that many openings will exist in the near future.

- Many teachers hold administrative certificates but do not seem motivated to seek administrative positions. Interest in a career pattern "through the chairs" seems to have waned.

- It is not as politically acceptable to raise administrative salaries as it is to raise teachers' salaries.

- Rural areas are generally the first to experience shortages and are believed to have a higher turnover of administrators.

- The superintendency is a very high risk position.

- The assistant principal position is not attractive to many people, yet it is seen as an entry level position in administration.
- A proliferation of administrative training programs may be contributing to a perceived lower quality of applicants.
- Leadership opportunities in the teacher unions may be attracting teachers who might otherwise seek administrative positions.
- Retirement incentives may be contributing to a shortage by shortening the length of service of some administrators.
- Negative stereotypes of the principal as portrayed in the media may have an adverse impact. There is a need to change the image of the principal in order that the role might be promoted as a career goal.
- Minority candidates are practically non-existent.
- There is little data available to provide a factual basis for describing what is happening in terms of administrative position openings and turnover.

The roundtable participants further agreed that:

- A need exists for more demographic data relative to the perceived shortages.
- Preparatory programs must be reviewed for quality assurance.
- Recruitment of minorities must be stimulated and promoted.
- A data base needs to be developed and maintained relative to turnover, size, and description of the candidate pool.
- Administrative roles must be made more attractive.

The Roundtable participants also indicated a continuing interest in the issue. They asked that Richard McDonald of the LEAD Center and Paul W. Haley from The Regional Laboratory conduct a survey and to periodically reassemble the group to continue the dialogue.

The survey was distributed to all 41 District Superintendents of the State and to search consultants who have a major presence in New York State.

Forty-five surveys were mailed. Thirty-eight were returned. The results of the survey are reported on the following pages.

SURVEY RESULTS

The following is an effort to give the fullest expression of the responses provided by those returning the survey questions. An effort is made to quantify the responses where possible and to provide all of the answers that seemed significant to the reviewers.

Question I

"Do you feel that there is a shortage of well qualified candidates for administrative searches that you have participated in recently or are familiar with? What evidence do you have that there is or is not a shortage?"

Summarization of Responses:

Thirty-five of 38 respondents indicated that in their judgment there is a shortage of well qualified candidates for administrative positions.

The evidence that suggests a shortage to these respondents includes:

a) A general decline in the number of candidates

b) A recent search committee identified only two out of 31

candidates as being well qualified for a high school principalship after reviewing credentials

c) Continuing low numbers of well qualified candidates for elementary and secondary building principalships

d) Twelve searches in three years have identified few candidates, but the quality of the candidates has been good

e) Twenty-one candidates applied for a small but high quality superintendency

f) Positions that attracted 100-125 candidates a few years ago now attract 25 to 30 candidates (some approximate numbers mentioned by two respondents)

g) Candidates have completed certification requirements and have academic qualification but lack experience

h) The number of searches that have been reopened were because of a poor quality of candidates

i) It is now difficult to present a slate of six or seven candidates for boards to review

j) The number of candidates and the quality of the top 20% has dwindled

k) The same candidates are in the market for several years

l) For administrative openings in a BOCES, five searches failed to produce more than ten candidates

m) Half as many applications are received as were received a few years ago

n) Thirty-eight applications were received recently with only five identified as competent, some superintendency openings with as few as 12 or 15 candidates

Other comments include:

- Good jobs still attract good people

- Experience of candidates is more parochial than in the past

- A survey of students in an administrative course taught by one respondent revealed that less than half aspired to administrative positions

Question II

"Do you feel that there is a change in the quality of candidates that you have reviewed for administrative positions recently? What evidence do you have of this?"

Summarization of Responses:

Thirty of the 38 respondents felt that there has been a change in the quality of candidates; a summation of their responses follows:

a) Current candidates seem to have less experience than candidates in previous years and the experiences are more limited

b) The pool of candidates is smaller; it follows that the number of well qualified candidates is fewer

c) Good candidates seem reluctant to move

d) Many candidates have a record of poor experience as an administrator

e) It is easy to screen 40-50 candidates down to eight or ten

f) Applicants for the superintendency often fail to have building level experience

g) Applicants have poor or limited internship experience

h) Many applicants have a record of only one to two years in previous positions

i) Applicants are often experiencing difficulty in their present position

The eight respondents that did not feel that the quality of candidates for administrative positions has declined offered the following evidence:

a) Changes have occurred in the number of applicants, but not the quality, was reported by several respondents

b) There are always sufficient numbers of good candidates to interview

c) Women applicants have been strong candidates...men have slipped on their interview conference when compared to women

d) The top three or four candidates are not different than at any other time

e) Current candidates have more formal education and are more articulate

Question III

"If there is a shortage, what is your impression of the primary causative factor?"

Summarization of Responses:

There is a dynamic improvement in teacher salaries vis-a-vis those of administrators. This is especially true of entry levels. It appears that fewer teachers see any great financial or psychological advantage in leaving the classroom for the longer workday and workyear to assume the additional burdens of leadership and responsibility, when the salary differential is not sufficient enough to

compensate for the loss of job security, the added emotional turmoil, and the conflict associated with administrative life.

These factors were most frequently mentioned:

a) The high cost of relocation

b) Unionism and teacher empowerment have made administrative life complex and more difficult

c) The increasing election of single issue, special interest candidates to board of education; fewer quality boards

d) The prevalence of two career families which limits mobility and change

e) A lessening of prestige and the power of administrative positions

f) The aging out of a generation of educators which was reduced during the "teacher glut" period

g) The sunshine laws and other publicity make being a candidate hazardous

Question IV

"If you perceive a shortage, is the shortage evenly distributed across all levels of adminstration, i.e. elementary principals, secondary principals, business administrators, superintendents? If not, what particular positions is it most evident in?

Summarization of Responses:

a) Most respondents who feel that there is a shortage, reported that the shortage was evident at all administrative levels. Business administrators, superintendents and high school principal positions seem to

be the most difficult to fill. Applicants for director of programs in a BOCES were mentioned as being in short supply

b) Fewer applicants seem to be available for line positions than for staff positions

Question V

"If there is a lessening of quality of administrative candidates, is the poorer quality at all levels of administrative roles? If not, what particular positions is it evident in?"

Summarization of Responses:

a) Most respondents reported that there is lessening of the quality of applicants, and that it is evident in all positions

b) Many responses indicated that the lessening of quality was most pronounced in applicants for superintendent, business official and secondary principal positions

Question VI

"If there is a declining quality in the candidates now applying for administrative positions, to what would you attribute this?"

Summarization of Responses:

a) Most respondents felt that a decline in quality was a product of the shortage in general

b) Poor administrative preparation programs and lowering of standards in graduate programs

c) Lack of specific programs to prepare business officials

d) It is not a career option for the talented as it once was

e) Preparation programs are costly, and empowerment may keep some talented people in the teacher ranks

f) The teaching pool is also weak. The profession has not drawn top notch people for 20 years; we've run out of talent

g) There are fewer mentors modeling appropriate behaviors

Question VII

"What suggestions would you have to improve the quantity of available candidates?"

Summarization of Responses:

a) Allow more flexibility in securing candidates for administration positions who are otherwise qualified but do not hold the specific credential

b) Promote less militancy on the part of unions; develop a more collegial working relationship

c) Establish a more professional climate for administrative positions

d) Improve the level of compensation (mentioned by a large number of respondents)

e) Paint a more attractive picture of the administrative role

f) Lower the cost of higher education; improve the administration programs

g) Promote administration as a profession vis-a-vis teaching

h) Greater efforts should be made to identify promising candidates

i) Alternative routes to certification should be considered

Question VIII

"What suggestions would you have to improve the quality of available candidates for adminstration?"

Summarization of Responses:

a) Improve the preparation programs and the internships. Decent pay and a good clinical setting are essential for the internship

b) Provide sufficient support staff for administrative tasks to be performed in a professional manner

c) Graduate schools should be more discerning; some are purely certification factories

d) Training programs must stress the most recent research, i.e., shared decision making and management models such as Effective Schools

e) Greater emphasis in preparation programs on curriculum, instruction, program development, supervision skills, without necessarily reducing instruction in the areas of management

f) More involvement of boards of education in the issues of identifying, attracting, and promoting good school leadership

g) Values clarification (ethics) should be included in the curriculum

h) Increased experiences in regard to school finance and budgeting

i) The answer to increasing the number of quality candidates in administration is to make education more exciting, more intellectually stimulating, more amenable to risk taking. So long as an administrator's value is measured by belt tightening and student test scores, we will continue to attract very predictable and very dull people, and that does not bode well for the youngsters or our nation

j) Tighten up admission requirements for administration preparation programs

k) Reduce the number of preparation programs

l) A recommitment of major universities to the preparation of candidates

m) Stricter requirements for quality internship programs is needed

n) Recruitment efforts should be increased

o) Alternative pathways from the other professional and management sectors should be considered

p) Some type of "on the job" training should be required

q) Continued emphasis on training with administrators at all levels is essential

Summary

The School Reform movement of the last several years has focused rather sharply on the quality and quantity of teachers along with issues of raising academic standards and restructuring schools. There has been little notice paid and little speculation by reformers relative to the availability of top notch personnel for designated leadership positions in education for coming years. Both the National

Governor's Association and former Secretary of Education William Bennett have talked to the need for improved leadership and have suggested that greater access to educational administration positions may be desirable. Mr. Bennett suggests retired military officers as a good source of candidates.

There is strong evidence that school administrators are an aging group at the national level. The American Association of School Administrators conducts an annual survey of their administrative members. The most recent report of that survey— Needs Assessment of AASA Members, 1987-1988— provided data relative to the age of administrators. The data indicated that in 1974-1975 those administrators responding to the survey that were under 40 years of age represented 16.3 percent of the total. Those 55 years of age and older represented 23.1 percent of the total in 1974-1975. In 1987-1988 administrators under 40 years of age represent only seven percent of the total while those 55 years of age and older represent 29.9 percent of the total. Therefore it seems safe to conclude that the relative age of administrators has increased in the last ten years.

It also follows that if the pool of teaching candidates is relatively smaller than in previous years, then the pool of candidates for administrative positions will also be reduced if all other factors are considered equal. New York State requirements for administrative certification state that a candidate for certification have three years of teaching or administration or pupil personnel experience.

It may also logically follow that if a lesser quality of students is attracted to teaching, then the pool of teachers desiring to become administrators may also be relatively less attractive as aspiring administrators. Attracting the best and the brightest to a career in teaching is an imperative in itself. It may also be an imperative because it is from the teaching ranks that administrators are drawn.

The existence of many more persons certified for administration than actual administrative positions is a thought provoking fact. It may be used to support the notion that a shortage of school administration candidates does not exist.

A Master's degree in administration has in the past both satisfied a permanent teaching certificate requirement and also provided certification as an administrator. Many persons have acquired the certification as a future career option. This helps to account for the existence of many teachers certified as administrators. It does not explain why many do not ever become candidates for administrative positions, although they have that option. The survey report offers some enlightenment in this matter.

The survey results are persuasive in concluding that well qualified administrative candidates are relatively fewer in number than in previous times for all administrative positions. It raises serious questions about the preparation of candidates, attractiveness of administrative positions, salary, and the professional work environment for administrators.

These questions need to be addressed through further and more intensive examination. The need for good data much beyond numbers of certificate holders and number of positions is critical. Little is known relative to administrative turnover rates and the causes of turnover. Considerable differences may exist in the quality of preparatory programs, but little is known of the relationship between preparation programs and the success of administrators. Programs for attracting minorities and women to administration may well suffer from lack of good data and good understanding of the need for and risks involved in administration.

The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands has been implementing the Northeast Common Market project. This project, with the endorsement of the Chief State School Officers of the Northeast States, is developing a data base to establish a census of teachers in the northeast states. This data base is being developed by the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research. A recent decision to include administrators in this study is significant. A simulation model is being developed that will test the import of such variables as salary and retirement on the

availability of all educational personnel. Plans are underway to attempt to evaluate many of the issues raised on this survey against the data. A consideration of working conditions of administrators is to be a part of this study.

Hopefully this and other surveys will provoke and support action by policy makers at all levels and by professional associations to assure that school districts will have abundant, well qualified candidates to meet their administrative needs.

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